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AUTHOR Partridge, Susan
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ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers, this article offers a definition of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), discusses its relevance to instruction, and provides illustrations of the implementation of neuro-linguistic programming in instructional contexts. NLP is defined as an approach to instruction that recognizes the familiar visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modality preferences of pupils and supplements those with the concepts of access systems and representation systems. The concept of access systems includes all sensory reception, including olfactory and gustatory. The concept of representation system indicates not only how an individual codes and symbolizes information but also how that individual represents him/herself through speech. Examples of a representation system by which teachers might improve communication with students are offered as well as examples of sentences in which language corresponds to various neuro-linguistic styles. Tips for discovering students' and teachers' primary representational systems and for applying NLP in the classroom are suggested. (RH)

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Neuro-Linguistic Programming: A Discussion of Why and How

Currently, we're hearing from reputable scholars about the importance of teaching to a child's learning style and, even beyond this, to his/her neuro-linguistic style, which, we are told, by scholars, corresponds with his/her learning style.

Veteran teachers, undoubtedly, recall that for many years there wasn't much, if any, attention paid to determining and following a child's learning style; yet there were those who felt it important. It was years ago that Dr. Joseph Wepman (7), a noted educator, stated his feelings about the importance of modality preference and the corresponding instructional method. Dr. Wepman wrote, "Homogeneous grouping for educational purposes in kindergarten through third grade, both by modality preference of the children and by the modality orientation of the instructional method -- auditory versus visual -- seems an important area to study."

Dr. Wepman offered several cases to support his belief. One was that of a twelve-year-old, who, after being taught to his stronger modality (visual) gained thirty points in his measurable I.Q. and was no longer classified as mentally retarded.

Another child, a fifteen-year-old with a marked reduction in auditory processing was, at the suggestion of Dr. Wepman and his associates, given tutorial exposure to visual sight training; this resulted in advancement in the child's reading achievement and an almost disappearance of his acting-out behavior.

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Today, reputable educational journals contain a substantial number of articles dealing with learning styles and neuro-linguistic styles. Susan D. Keeffe (3) says, "Observant teachers can easily spot students' learning styles and adjust instruction accordingly." She, too, offers a substantial number of examples as to how adjusting teaching to a child's learning style resulted in improvement.

In addition to the observation suggested by Keeffe, there are a number of reputable tests (1) which can be used. Some tests have been available for a long time, and some continue to be made. Among those which have "stood the value test" throughout many years are Dr. Joseph Wepman's Auditory Perception Test as well as the tests of visual perception, authored by Marianne Frostig.

Articles dealing with neuro-linguistic styles and the importance of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) continue to appear in reputable journals. Fortunately, the articles contain many valuable suggestions as to how the programming might be done, as well as several "success stories" by those who have experienced success with it.

What is Neuro-Linguistic Programming? McCabe (4) defines it thus:

> NLP recognizes the familiar visual, auditory, or kinesthetic modality preference and further elaborates with two additional concepts: access systems and representation systems. These systems are somewhat analogous to concepts familiar to most

> educators: receptive and expressive language systems. The NLP concept of access systems is broader than the more familiar concept of receptive language since it includes all sensory reception including olfactory and gustatory -- not only language reception.
>
> If a student's learning preference is clearly visual, auditory or kinesthetic, it follows that his preferred language system, similar to the more familiar concept of expressive language, is labeled the representation system -- aptly named since it tells us not only how a particular individual codes and symbolizes information in the complex storage system of the brain, but also how the individual represents himself through speech.

McCabe acknowledges that many students can learn via any modality, but she feels that if teachers honor the concept of teaching to reach each student, they will increase their communication effectiveness by using language that matches their students' preferred learning style. She offers a number of examples of a representation system with which teachers might practice in order to improve communication with each student. A few examples follow:

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
see	say	grasp
focus	listen	touch
glance	describe	perform
examine	speak	practice
observe	communicate	move
watch	explain	demonstrate
picture	tell	play

McCabe also offers sentences in which language corresponding

to various neuro-linguistic styles is used. Some examples follow:

A K V

1. Listen as I demonstrate how to watch for the details in the story.

V K A

2. See if you can grasp the concept as I tell it to you slowly.

Torres and Katz (5) are also among those who believe that "NLP is one way in which teachers can increase their communication effectiveness and explore the basic process of how they share information." They suggest listening carefully to the predicates a person uses in order to discover his/her primary (more highly developed) representational system. They also suggest that teachers should become aware of their own representational systems and thus avoid mismatching which they feel can frustrate communication. They offer examples of mismatched predicates. An example follows:

> Student (visual): "I just can't see myself doing any better in your class, Mrs. Smith."
> Teacher (kinesthetic): "Well, John, how do you feel about not being able to do better?"

They also offer examples of matched predicates, one of which follows:

> Student (visual): "I have an idea and I'm clear about

what you expect, but I just can't focus on my homework."
Teacher (visual): "I see. Let's examine some different ideas and see if we can come up with a plan that will better enable you to focus on your work."

Torres and Katz feel that if a teacher, working on a one-to-one basis, matches the student's primary representational system, he/she is ensuring "more direct and precise information." They go beyond this and state that teachers can teach students to expand their use of other representational systems and thus learn in different modalities and from teachers who may have a favored representational system which is different from theirs.

In designing lesson plans for communicating content, teachers can, and should, take into account the primary representational systems of all students. Obviously, content can be given in various modes. Torres and Katz offer what they call "the two most important dimensions for applying NLP in the classroom":

1. targeting instruction to the student's favored representational system; and

2. congruency between the method of teaching and the specific ways content is shared.

Finally, they say, "It is time we moved beyond what is being taught in school as to how we teach and, more importantly, how we communicate and share information with our students." They add that teachers should become involved with new communication technologies and should improve their speaking and writing skills.

Rather recently, we have been hearing a lot about left/right

brain functioning. This brings to mind another factor in teaching content to children whose favored representational system is visual: Should the content be given in writing, for example, or should it be given in graph or map form? We have been told by scholars that the whole-to-part approach is that of the "right brained" child and the part-to-whole that of the "left brained" child. Might a map or graph, then, help the "right brained" child to better understand specific content than would written form?

Barbara Vitale (6) who has done considerable work with left/right brain functioning has offered a number of screening devices and learning strategies -- "right brained" in their approach. The use of color, movement, imagery, sound, and touch are found throughout the strategies offered, and holistic strengths are considered. Conceivably, Vitale's strategies might prove a help to teachers as they design programs for their students.

It is concluded that educators would do well to consider NLP (with all its ramifications) for improved communication with their students, especially those whom they are finding difficult to teach. Successes offered by educators who have experienced success with NLP are readily availalbe, and it is felt that they should not be ignored, as they may offer just the help that is needed for an individual child and improve communication in general as well.

Decades of experience with young people have been convincing

in the fact that many would welcome a variety in the modes of presenting content material, and, if these modes are targeted toward the various representational systems of the students, they would, no doubt profit by their teachers' use of them in the presentation of material. This seems a plausible reason to pay heed to colleagues' successes with NLP.

Finally, it is concluded that any more-or-less negative reports about modes of learning and favored representational systems should be carefully studied before being accepted. This is especially true for those educators who honor the concept of teaching to reach each student. Fred Dorn (2) gave us a reminder, penned by Dilts and Green:

> Surely, a statistical figure tells nothing of the unique individuals before you. In NLP we believe that people have to rely on statistics when they don't understand the underlying pattern. (Dilts and Green, 1982, p. 242).

Granted, a number of the success stories in the past have dealt with individuals, but, fortunately, there are now articles in reputable journals which contain explicit information as to how to accommodate individual learning styles and their "corresponding" neuro-linguistic styles within the classroom setting. It is felt that they are worth considering.

Implications for Educators

Become involved with new communication technologies.

Take advantage of all information on NLP that is offered by reputable people.

Try applying the information, especially with your difficult cases.

Share your successes/failures with others.

Determine your students' primary representational systems and help them to expand them.

Keep your students' favorite representational systems in mind as you design your lesson plans.

Present content in modes consistent with students' representational systems.

Keep in mind the holistic learners as well as the part-to-whole learners.

Finally, try to teach to reach each child. Knowing each child well will enable you to individualize somewhat within your classroom instruction.

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